

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

February 3, 2005 Hearing Room C

8:30 A.M. Tapes 15 - 16

(corrected 07/28/05)

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Rep. Donna Nelson, Chair**

Rep. Phil Barnhart, Vice-Chair

Rep. Brian Boquist

Rep. Scott Bruun

Rep. Dave Hunt

Rep. Betty Komp

MEMBERS EXCUSED: **Rep. Debi Farr, Vice-Chair**

STAFF PRESENT: **Jim Stenbridge, Committee Administrator**

Erin Seiler, Committee Assistant

MEASURES/ISSUES HEARD:

Veterans' Issues - Informational Meeting

These minutes are in compliance with Senate and House Rules. Only text enclosed in quotation marks reports a speaker's exact words. For complete contents, please refer to the tapes.

TAPE/# Speaker Comments

TAPE 15, A

002 Chair Nelson Opens the meeting at 8:37 a.m. Opens the informational meeting on Veterans' Issues.

VETERANS' ISSUES - INFORMATIONAL MEETING

016 Frank Freyer Legislative Liaison, Oregon County Veterans' Service Officers Association (OCVSOA). Submits and summarizes written testimony regarding his history as a County Veterans' Service Officers (CVSO) **(EXHIBIT A)**.

051 Freyer Submits and summarizes financial spreadsheet for the CVSO Pilot Project **(EXHIBIT B)**. Discusses the month-by-month costs and savings associated with moving a veteran receiving state-funded Medicaid benefits to federally-funded Veterans' Benefits.

095 Freyer Explains the financial significance of identifying and removing veterans from Medicaid rolls and getting them Veterans' Benefits.

130 Freyer Reviews the administration and distribution of Veterans' Benefits, which are based on mental and physical status.

186 Chair Nelson Asks if the Veterans' Administration (VA) requires a veteran receiving long-term care at an uncontracted nursing home to move to a facility that does have a contract with the VA when their benefits are switched from state Medicaid to Veterans' Benefits.

199 Freyer States that the VA does not require a veteran to leave a facility. Explains that, rather than the state paying the care facility directly, the veteran will pay the care facility because the VA pays Veterans' Benefits directly to the veteran.

213 Rep. Barnhart Verifies that the veteran has the right to manage their own care and remain in care facility of choice.

253 Freyer Explains that the VA does not contract with specific nursing homes, the VA will contract with any state accredited nursing home.

261 Freyer

States that if a veteran is in a nursing home that is not accredited by the state the VA will still pay for a veteran remain at that facility, but only after the VA has inspected it.

- 272 Freyer Explains the difference between pension benefits and service-connected disability benefits.
- 296 Chair Nelson Asks if a veteran will be removed from a care facility if benefits switch from Medicaid to VA benefits.
- 307 Freyer Explains that a veteran does not lose Medicaid benefits if they receive VA benefits for a service-connected disability.
- 350 Freyer States that there is no reason to be moving anybody from anywhere because it is simply just a shifting of funding from the state Medicaid system to the federal VA system.
- 381 Freyer Discusses the difference between service-connected benefits and pension benefits.

TAPE 16, A

- 021 Chair Nelson Asks if there are any disadvantages to moving a veteran from Medicaid to VA benefits.
- 024 Freyer Responds that there are not any disadvantages to making these changes. Speaks to how a service-connected medical disability can be brought up at anytime.
- 059 Freyer Speaks to how, under VA benefits, all medicine and durable medical equipment are free and easily attainable.
- 101 Kevin O'Reilly Government Relations/Advocacy Director, Oregon Paralyzed Veterans'. States that the VA holds contracts with several durable medical equipment providers, affording them a better price.
- 118 Rep. Boquist Asks what statutory changes need to be addressed.
- 145 Freyer Speaks to the need to fully fund CVSO.

- 219 Mac MacDonald Representative, Veterans' Organizations. Discusses the negative impact of the 2000 Millennium bill.
- 240 Jim Stembridge Committee Administrator. Submits list of Veterans' Committee bill proposals (**EXHIBIT C**).
- 244 Chair Nelson Reviews Veterans' concepts in the process of being drafted by legislative counsel (**EXHIBIT C, Page 1**).
- 339 Rep. Boquist Explains a referendum being drafted to establish permanent funding for County Veteran Service Officers.

TAPE 15, B

- 010 Nelson Presents concepts for House Veterans' bills (**EXHIBIT C, Page 2**).
- 090 Rep. Boquist Explains that a proposal for establishing a retroactive life insurance and death gratuity fund for National Guard has been announced in the U.S Congress.
- 104 MacDonald Discusses why all Oregon veterans and soldiers need to be included in all programs and benefits packages.
- 147 Rep. Bruun Expresses concern about the burden placed on local governments regarding proposal for an increase in the property tax exemption for veterans. Asks if such a tax exemption should be on state income tax.
- 158 Rep. Boquist States that rather than tax exemption, an interest-free property tax deferment should be considered for deployed soldiers.
- 210 Chair Nelson Continues reviewing list of veterans' issues that could be drafted House bills (**EXHIBIT C, Page 2**).
- 278 Freyer Addresses the ability to fund unemployed spouse/guardian of disabled veteran living allowance while caring for veterans.
- 320 Chair Nelson Discusses the feasibility of requiring colleges to give two years free tuition to full-time veteran or veteran's widow.

- 342 Stembridge Submits written testimony on behalf of Lori Sattenspiel regarding free tuition at community colleges **(EXHIBIT D)**.
- 360 Rep. Boquist Explains that there is not a shortage of educational funds from the National Guard and growing amount of educational funds from the federal government.

TAPE 16, B

- 020 Chair Nelson Speaks to the remainder of bill concepts including the funding of Oregon Veterans' Home and fund for guard license plates **(EXHIBIT C, Page 3)**.
- 072 Rep. Hunt Announces several ideas for bills and several legislative concepts in the process of being drafted by legislative counsel. Expresses concern with regards to cost of many of the proposals and that it would be judicious to identify potential sources of funding prior to drafting.
- 118 Chair Nelson Discusses proposals for joint memorials **(EXHIBIT C, Page 4)**.
- 199 Chair Nelson Discusses proposals for joint resolutions **(EXHIBIT C, Page 5)**.
- 259 Chair Nelson Closes the informational meeting on Veterans' Issues. Adjourns the committee meeting at 10:15 a.m.

EXHIBIT SUMMARY

- A. Veterans' Issues, written testimony, Frank Freyer, 1 p
- B. Veterans' Issues, Pilot Project Spreadsheet, Frank Freyer, 2 pp
- C. Veterans' Issues, Committee Bill Proposals Report, staff, 5 pp
- D. Veterans' Issues, written testimony of Lori Sattenspiel, staff, 1 p